

# The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

Clearly, there is a lot of diversity within the two generations of seniors. Here are some creative ideas for reaching them.

## Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Members of the Silent Generation

1. **Present a True Picture.** Avoid portraying all older seniors as frail or inactive. A new study of seniors 70+ found that, on average, they feel 13 years younger than their actual age. Focus on the benefits of getting older, not the limitations.
2. **Mix It Up.** Since women typically outlive men, show mixed groups of friends, not just couples, in materials. Include pictures with grandchildren.
3. **Serve Those Who Served Their Country.** The majority of men of this generation served in the military. Thousands of women also served as nurses or volunteered with organizations like the American Red Cross and the United Service Organization (USO). Make outreach to veterans' groups, homes, and hospitals part of your strategy.
4. **Go Along for the Ride.** Partner with transportation services that take seniors on errands or to appointments; have materials on hand that include the myths and facts about SNAP benefits.
5. **Throw a Great Party.** Host social events where people mix and mingle. Make it fun by having activities, games, food, and entertainment, and provide information about SNAP. Putting SNAP information in a game format like BINGO, crossword puzzles, or even a "true/false" quiz is fun and helps get your message across in a memorable way.



## Tips & Tools

Invite staff from your local SNAP office to attend and help with prescreenings, filling out application forms, and/or scheduling appointments.

Outreach workers or volunteers who will be completing SNAP application forms should be trained in how to fill out the form. If applicants submit applications that are not filled out correctly, it not only creates problems for the customers but also for the local SNAP offices. In addition, it can undermine the trust and relationship between the customer and the outreach worker or organization.

## Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Baby Boomers

1. **Keep It Short. Keep It Simple.** Boomers also find themselves as "card carrying" members of the sandwich generation—providing for older adult parents while taking care of children at home. Place information in venues that they normally visit, like the grocery store or pharmacy waiting area. They might not be eligible but may know of someone who is.
2. **Showcase Diversity.** Immigrants represent 17 percent of all Baby Boomers. Connect with communities and organizations that serve immigrant and non-English-speaking households.
3. **Go Online.** Nearly three-fourths of Baby Boomers go online at least once a month. Tap into sites like AARP Foundation's online community or senior-oriented social networking sites.
4. **Forget Labels.** Boomers view themselves as young and vibrant and typically won't respond to anything aimed at "seniors." Resist using this label and other age-related expressions, like "golden years."
5. **Remember the Workplace.** Many are still actively involved in their careers or have returned to the workplace as part-timers. Human Resources directors are generally willing to provide helpful information to employees.



## Recipe for Success

*"Seniors are harder to reach because they are more isolated, often live alone, and don't have anyone to help them navigate the SNAP enrollment process. They are also more mistrustful of giving out personal information and are potentially too proud to ask for government assistance."*

Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Public Policy Priorities

# The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

## Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Seniors With Disabilities

1. **Join Others.** Form partnerships and provide materials to local groups that serve disabled communities, including individuals with low vision (Lighthouse International), limited hearing (Hearing Loss Association of America), and mobility (Easter Seals). Don't forget that help is a two-way street. It is important to recruit volunteer outreach workers from these agencies as well.
2. **Get Buy-In From Retailers.** Ask grocery stores, and stores that sell medical equipment and supplies (such as wheelchairs and walkers), if they will put up posters and provide sample SNAP promotional materials.
3. **Seek Aid From Nurses.** Meet with rehabilitation facilities, dialysis centers, and local chapters of the Visiting Nurses' Association or Meals on Wheels groups to reach seniors who are recently disabled and may be considering support services for the first time.
4. **Be Part of a Road Show.** Make a list of health-related support groups aimed at seniors, such as those focusing on diabetes, arthritis, low vision, prostate or breast cancer, and stroke—and offer to make mini-presentations about SNAP and its benefits.
5. **Consider Furry Friends.** According to Meals on Wheels, about 60 percent of seniors who receive their services live with pets. Target organizations and veterinarians that provide discounted services for seniors, such as the Humane Society.



### Tips & Tools

Volunteer to host a “meet and greet” event with organizations serving seniors in your community. A good place to start is with the local Area Agency on Aging to see what services are provided and how your agency might fit in.

Your local SNAP office is also an important partner and may attend. Also, your SNAP office might be able to direct you to other agencies in your community.

As part of your planning, take time to review the [Administration on Aging's](#) policies that guide outreach programs aimed at seniors. These guidelines cover nutrition services, home-delivered meals, guidelines for paying volunteers, and organizing community service programs.



### Recipe for Success

*“We partner with about 480 agencies. That’s the secret for our food bank...people go into other agencies because they don’t have enough rent money, utilities, or they have a legal problem...”*

Sandy Hinojos, Community Food Bank, Tucson, AZ

# The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

## Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Seniors Who Are Guardians

1. **Take It Back to School.** If you live in one of the areas (typically in the South) where grandparents raising children is more common, partner with your local school district to distribute information through school events and staff. Make sure to include PTA meetings, school meal service directors and child nutrition professionals, school counselors, school nurses, and athletic coaches.
2. **Work With the Professionals.** Partner with your local SNAP office to train workers from key organizations such as visiting nurses and registered dietitians who are affiliated with your local county office. Educate them about the nutrition benefits of SNAP and how to apply. You may also ask them to make referrals to your organization for budgeting and/or prescreenings.
3. **Build Your Own Village.** Contact programs for foster parents and grandparents, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and other mentoring programs to help get information out. Keep summer camps and recreation programs in mind, especially those aimed at low-income families. Area Agencies on Aging often sponsor Grandparents Raising Grandchildren programs.
4. **Stay In Step With the Seasons.** Participate in annual events such as an end-of-summer school supply drive, "Back to School Night," fall coat giveaway, winter Angel Tree gift exchange, and spring registration for summer camps and recreation programs. Ask to distribute a one-page factsheet or to set up an information booth or table at events that parents/guardians may attend.
5. **Put It In a Backpack.** Send information home with children who receive free or reduced-price lunch. You may want to consider timing this for the beginning of the school year or at the end of grading periods as children may begin to live with a guardian mid-school year.